

3 March 2004

BBC Charter Review Consultation
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH

"Your BBC, Your Say"

"What do you value most about the BBC?"

- a) reliable news and information, (inter-)national and regional
- b) classical music
- c) documentaries and educational material

I chiefly enjoy: BBC Scotland, BBC News 24, BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4, BBC 7 and BBC World Service.

"How should the BBC adapt to changes in technology and culture?"

I have found my Freeview box to be generally very acceptable, except that it does not currently provide as much information as analogue teletext. I think that digital TV and radio could be made available in this way to all listeners/viewers. I am much less convinced about relying on the Internet, since many people will never have good (or, in some cases, any) connection to it. Analogue services must NOT be switched off till virtually ALL viewers and listeners have good digital services. (At present, some areas of Scotland do not even have good analogue services.)

"What do you think of the television, radio and online services the BBC provides?"

I would like more programmes on scientific subjects, addressed to a slightly more intelligent audience than seems to be assumed at present.

There is also far too much "advertising" of BBC programmes and services in between programmes, both on TV and radio.

I get very irritated at radio news reports which are simply television reports without the pictures. Radio is a different medium and needs a different style of reporting. Trying to combine them is just penny-pinching.

(I have no opinion on the online services, since I rarely use these).

"Should the BBC run commercial services?"

I have no objection to the BBC making money from marketing; I myself have been happy to buy recordings of favourite programmes.

"How should we pay for the BBC?"

Cheerfully! And I cannot propose anything preferable to the license fee. It should certainly NOT be financed by subscription, NOR by carrying commercial advertising.

"Is the BBC organised in the most effective and efficient way?"

Possibly not – most organisations could be improved to some extent. For example, I guess (without any expert knowledge on the subject) that the process of

buying in programmes made by independent companies, instead of employing the same people to do the same job within the BBC, probably wastes a lot of money. I also understand that the BBC does not own its own transmitters, which seems foolish.

But I don't think the BBC is seriously "broken", so I would not like to see a lot of time and resources spent on "fixing it". It should be allowed to get on with making programmes.

"How should the BBC be run? How should it be regulated?"

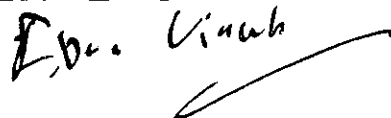
It should be run by people who have come up through the organisation, who understand it thoroughly and care about it passionately. It should be regulated by a strictly independent group of people, not by an arm of the Government. If necessary, parts of the Governors' duties could be re-arranged, but on the whole I don't think the current system is a bad one.

"How do we ensure that the BBC is properly accountable to the public and Parliament?"

Maybe an independent organisation such as VLV (the Voice of the Listener and Viewer) could be given an official rôle in regulating the BBC. It should also be possible for members of the general public to be elected as Governors.

Currently, many programmes regularly invite listeners and viewers to write/phone/text/e-mail their views on particular topics. Perhaps they could also be invited to give their opinions on matters pertaining to the more general running of the BBC.

The BBC has played an enormously important part in my life, and in the life of this country, over many years. It should not be changed purely for the sake of change; it should be allowed to evolve gradually, while still filling its vital rôle at the heart of the nation.



Dr Fiona Vincent